

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 EA-07 ISO-00 EB-07 /019 W

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R 270248Z APR 76

FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMCONSUL SYDNEY

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

SECSTATE WASHDC 5161

USDOC WASHDC

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SINGAPORE 2066

SECSTATE FOR EXIMBANK; USDOC FOR BIC/OED/MEPD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: BEXP, SN

SUBJ: SINGAPORE'S MASS RAPID TRANSIT (MRT) PROJECT

REF: A. SYDNEY 0888 (NOTAL); B. BANGKOK 9012 (NOTAL)

1. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED. FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR MRT SYSTEM IS BEING DONE BY WILBUR SMITH IN ASSOCIATION WITH PARSONS BRINCKERHOFF-TUDOR-BECHTEL. STUDY IS FUNDED BY UNDP UTILIZING IBRD AS EXECUTING AGENCY. ALTHOUGH PHASE II DRAFT REPORT HAS BEEN COMPLETED, IT IS STILL RECEIVING COMMENTS FROM GOS OFFICIALS BEFORE SUBMISSION TO MASS TRANSIT STUDY STEERING COMMITTEE FOR FINAL ACCEPTANCE. THESE FORMALITIES SHOULD BE COMPLETED BY END OF MAY. FEASIBILITY STUDY SHOULD BE PUBLISHED SOON THEREAFTER.

2. BRIEF REPORT ON PHASE I OF STUDY IS ALREADY AVAILABLE FROM SINGAPORE NATIONAL PRINTERS, 303 UPPER SERANGOON ROAD, SINGAPORE 13 FOR S\$3 AND POSTAGE. PUBLISHED VERSION OF PHASE II IN-DEPTH STUDY WILL PROBABLY BE ABBREVIATED REPORT, SINCE GOS WISHES TO PREVENT DISCLOSURE OF CERTAIN ITEMS OF INFORMATION THAT COULD LEAD TO LAND SPECULATION.

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3. GOS HAS NOT MADE FINAL DECISION TO GO AHEAD WITH MRT PROJECT,

BUT WE CONSIDER THIS FOREGONE CONCLUSION. EMBASSY UNABLE TO GAUGE TIMING FOR ENGINEERING OR CONSTRUCTION PHASE AT THIS TIME, AND GOS HAS TOLD US THAT IT WOULD BE PREMATURE TO CONSIDER EXTERNAL FINANCING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE UNTIL FEASIBILITY STUDY IS FINALIZED.

4. ALTHOUGH THERE HAS BEEN NO REPEAT NO REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS, IT IS NOT TOO EARLY FOR U.S. ENGINEERING FIRMS TO MAKE CONTACT WITH GOS (I.E. NGIAM TONG DOW, PERMSEC OF FINANCE AND STEERING COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN, OR LIM LEONG GEOK, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (ROADS AND TRANSPORTATION) OF PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT). END UNCLASSIFIED.

5. BEGIN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE.

COMMENT: GOS HAS DISTURBING HABIT OF BEING IN RUSH TO SHOW PROGRESS ON LARGE PROJECTS LIKE THE MRT OR NEW CHANGI AIRPORT, IN WHICH P.M. LEE HAS HIGH LEVEL OF INTEREST. THIS SOMETIMES LEADS TO A SITUATION WHICH DOES NOT ALWAYS ALLOW SUFFICIENT TIME FOR U.S. FIRMS TO SHOW THEIR INTEREST, UNLESS THEY GET IN ON THE GROUND FLOOR AND MONITOR THE PROJECT CLOSELY.

6. GOS HAS BEEN VERY CLOSED-MOUTHED ABOUT INFORMATION ON THIS PROJECT. HOWEVER, WE UNDERSTAND THAT IGOS TECHNICAL TEAM WHICH VISITED HONG KONG TO STUDY ITS MRT PROJECT (AFTER P.M. LEE'S VISIT) HAS RECOMMENDED THAT EARLY CONSIDERATION BE GIVEN TO FOREIGN FINANCING OF CAPITAL IMPORTS REQUIRED AT LATER STAGE OF THE PROJECT. WE HAVE ALSO HEARD RUMORS THAT GOS IS ALREADY CONSIDERING FREEMAN FOX AND ASSOCIATES, WHICH IS INVOLVED IN HONG KONG MRT, FOR PRELIMINARY ENGINEERING SERVICES ON SINGAPORE'S MRT. END LIMITED OFFICIAL USE. HOLDRIDGE

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